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ABSTRACT

This document contains seven papers about managing Great Britain's further education colleges in the next century. The papers examine a wide range of administrative issues, including building on human resources investments through strategic planning, maintaining relationships with local education authorities, customer satisfaction as a marketing strategy, the potential benefits of restructuring a further education college into a flat structure in which clients are given a more active role, strategies to achieve racial/sexual equality and combat all forms of disadvantage at the administration level, and the need for further education colleges to continue adapting to economic and social changes. After a foreword by Susan Leather, the following papers are included: "Strategic Planning" (Ann Limb); "Principalship in the 1990s" (Patricia Twyman); "Marketing or Customer Care?" (Gillian Brain); "The Whole College Approach" (Rosemary Gray); "Ensuring Esteem for All in College: Aims and Objectives" (Helen Gilchrist); "Articles of Partnership" (Ethlyn Prince); and "Coming Through" (Diane Brace). Several articles included bibliographies. (MN)

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# MANAGING COLLEGES INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

ED 378 358

# Coombe Lodge Report

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## The Further Education Staff College



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COOMBE LODGE REPORT
Volume 22 Number 5

# MANAGING COLLEGES INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

By Diane Brace, Gillian Brain, Helen Gilchrist, Rosemary Gray, Ann Limb, Ethlyn Prince, and Patricia Twyman

Editor: Pippa Andrews

# Coombe Lodge Reports

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# MANAGING COLLEGES INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

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# FOREWORD

The message which comes through clearly from these varied articles is that a commitment to values underpins success. The diversity of achievements chronicled here reveals that the corporate identity which gives the long-term orientation and purposes for action grows from a shared vision of what the college thinks is worth doing. Short-term projects and responses become coherent only insofar as they arise from a more permanent, explicit system of beliefs.

The predominant values described in this Report are those arising from a belief about the worth of each individual in the organisation, whether this is called 'human resource investment' or 'client-centredness'. Also strongly delineated is the experience that discovering individual need and potential is only the first step to success. Equally essential is a flexible response and delivery of quality. All the facets of individual and institutional success come from the fusion of these two elements. The frequent emphasis on the need for attractive surroundings to reflect the ethos of caring, learning and development is the outward sign of this inward strength. The desire of the principals writing here that all members of the college should in some way share in decision-making is the ideal they see as uniting individual and organisational growth.

Much of the language is the language of marketing and financial control, which I see as symptomatic of their willingness and ability to explain themselves to the outside world in terms of its current preoccupations. This language does not seem to me to confine or restrain their core identity which at other times and other places would be externalised in another terminology. Consequently the frequent references to organisational flexibility and swift response suggest a readiness to accept unpredictable change and an attitude which sees change as necessarily confusing but also stimulating and opportunity-laden. Recognising, in an analogy from chaos theory, that there will always be large, patternless oscillations in any

organic life even when there is no external disturbance, they do not seek the futile security of rigid structures and predetermined responses.

The principals contributing here are all women. I wonder if that makes a difference?

*Elizabeth Ballinger*

# STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ann Limb
Director
Milton Keynes College

## COLLEGE DETAILS — MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE

Milton Keynes College is a medium sized further education college with approximately 1100 full-time and over 5000 part-time students enrolled on a broad range of academic and vocational courses. It offers a comprehensive post-16 tertiary curriculum with learning programmes which embrace GCSE, AS and A level work as well as specific vocational training courses related to the needs of industry, commerce and the professions. Most of our full-time students are aged between 16 and 19 years and live in the Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire area, which is one of the fastest growing urban areas in the United Kingdom. The majority of our part-time learners are adults. In addition to studying at college, they may be engaged in a variety of other activities ranging from full- and part-time employment to unpaid work in and outside the home. Milton Keynes is an international and multi-racial city with access to 30 million people within two and a half hours drive, the city offers more business prospects than London. The Milton Keynes College mission aims to reflect and promote this environment through its emphasis on personal development and achievement, equality of opportunity and the effective use of human resources.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING — BUILDING ON AN INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

One of the effects of the Education Reform Act has been the increased use of the term 'strategic planning' and the formalisation of practices which had perhaps become understated features of the further education service. This

paper aims to present a perspective on this issue which redresses the balance and asserts the value of investment in human resources. It is not concerned specifically with those aspects of strategic planning which relate, at a technical level, to a local education authority to the Department of Education and Science or to the Department of Employment. While acknowledging that these are important, observations and comments here are confined to that part of the process concerned with planning inside a college. In making them I draw upon my own experiences at Milton Keynes College and on the writings of Tom Peters. It is Tom Peters' view in **Thriving on chaos: a handbook for management revolution** that:

> As we move into these turbulent, ambiguous nineties and beyond, strategy making should not involve the old forms of strategic analysis that we did in the seventies. The essence of strategy is the creation of organisational capabilities that will allow us to react opportunistically to whatever happens. In the fully developed organisation, the front line person should be capable of being involved in strategy making. (Peters 1988)

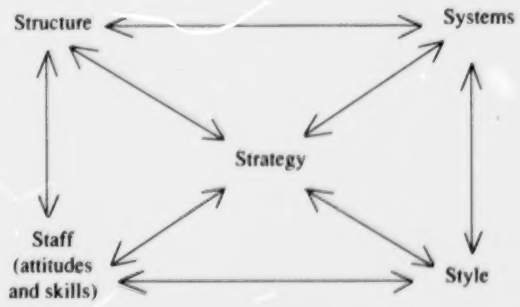
Research in the higher education sector in the United States confirms, in an educational context Tom Peters' view. Planning approaches used by institutions there in the 1970s were generally based on bureaucratic notions about organisational functions. By the late 1970s, the problems of trying to use rational planning models in colleges were becoming increasingly recognised and the focus shifted to the notion of strategic planning based on a college's ability to adapt to the external environment. It is currently being acknowledged that the values of the academic culture may be inconsistent with strategic planning's emphasis on sensing, serving and satisfying markets. Alternative responses, particularly in times of rapid change, are therefore currently being considered.

The aim of the approach to strategic planning and management at Milton Keynes College was to build upon and enhance organisational capabilities which were developed as a result of a college restructuring undertaken in 1988. In consequence, the reorganisation was predicated upon the assumption that the most valuable and costly resource of the college, the staff, should be involved in, and should derive maximum benefit from, the changes which occur. To this end, significant numbers of teaching and support staff gained promotion and increased status, salary and working conditions in the reorganised college. Subsequently, they have been

supported through the change by participation in a senior and middle management development programme[1] organised and delivered by an external consultant. This management development programme has been matched by a major programme of staff and curriculum development costing in the region of £100,000 per annum which aims to encourage all staff to play an active part in the college's continuing development. In this way, the college reorganisation has attempted to recognise the importance of investing in people, and developing their skills.

In so doing, I found it helpful to look at strategic management and change in relation to other elements of organisational capability and to recognise the need to integrate these dimensions in order to ensure college development. These relationships are shown in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1: Strategic management**




The requirement for the college to plan strategically presented an opportunity to acknowledge and test the value of this investment in its human resources. The approach which has been developed therefore aims to involve the staff of the college in the planning process and uses our line management structure as the mechanism for their participation. The majority of the full-time staff of Milton Keynes College are trained teachers with some industrial and commercial experience; planning skills form a

1 This was begun in June 1988 and continues to date. The programme, devised and implemented in conjunction with external consultants is based on the Director's commitment to a model of management based on openness and total quality and a belief in striving for continuous improvement.

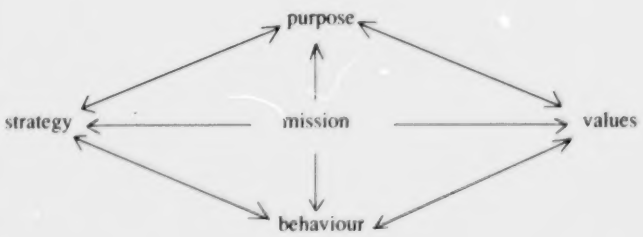
part of their portfolio of competences. I believe it is both professionally honest and managerially sensible to value, develop and promote the use of those abilities in determining the college's strategic plan. The processes used and the methods described in this paper derive from, and reflect the skills, experience, interests and levels of commitment of Milton Keynes College staff. The college's reorganisation, its current management structure, mission, value system, and ethos have determined this approach and have encouraged participation in the planning process from all the other major stakeholders in the college, namely the support staff, governors and students.

The starting point for our strategic planning and management is the college's mission. Our mission defines purpose and embodies our educational philosophy and values. It is a reference point by which we make decisions, determine implementation strategies and policy, judge behaviour and evaluate our performance. It informs and guides our strategic direction.

The active participation of over one-third of the full-time staff of the college in the determination of a mission statement is a key factor. This was achieved through the joint senior and middle management development programme.

The relationships between strategy and mission are shown in **Figure 2** which aims to illustrate the four main elements which combine to make an organisation's mission effective.

**Figure 2: Relationship between strategy and mission**



The **purpose** of Milton Keynes College is clarified through a short statement of mission which currently reads as follows:

— We create opportunities for people to achieve their personal, educational and employment goals.

— We aim to provide a quality service, in an environment which enables all those involved to learn to their full potential.

— Our way of working demonstrates a commitment to personal growth. We seek to encourage all those who have contact with the college to value this approach.

The formulation of this mission statement is based on a set of articulated and shared **values** which encourage particular forms of interaction and **behaviour**. These were determined by the middle and senior management teams as part of the management development programme referred to above. They are as follows.

— The contribution made by each and every member of college staff is of equal value to the effective and efficient running of the organisation. Our organisational structures and management style value teaching and support staff accordingly and both have access to the same facilities and opportunities.

— A commitment to the personal and professional development of the individual, for all employees of the college and for all students, leads to effective and creative work and fosters a high degree of professionalism.

— Learning about ourselves and each other means acknowledging that we all make mistakes sometimes. Viewing such experiences responsibly and positively ultimately leads to more effective forms of interaction between people.

— Individuals with information cannot avoid assuming responsibility.

— Learning is sometimes a difficult process, but it should aim to incorporate an appropriate sense of pleasure in achievement.

— Working together in informal or formal teams and sharing information and ideas is the principal mode of operation. However, some people work more effectively independently and others do not have the confidence or experience to organise themselves comfortably in a range of groups. It is therefore a vital feature of our developmental process to aim at accommodating different styles of working at the same time as encouraging a strong sense of corporate spirit.

— Openness means articulating values and principles and behaving with integrity and consistency. We all have a right to know who is responsible for making decisions and how they have been reached.

The increased emphasis on strategic planning which resulted from the Education Reform Act, encouraged us to look more closely at the **strategy** element of planning.

I needed to develop a planning mechanism at Milton Keynes College which aimed to value staff and involve them actively in the process. I focused on the newly organised line management structure as I believed it would help us to develop a whole college approach to planning and quality improvement. In so doing we have begun to link the establishment of institutional planning, development and review with the process of individual action planning, target setting and appraisal.

This link is supported by a management structure which is set within the context, purpose, values and behaviour outlined above. It is based on three layers of operation in relation to the student. It can be represented in simple diagrammatic form as shown in **Figure 3**.

We currently have over 6000 full- and part-time students. They are supported, in different ways, by approximately 260 full-time and part-time teaching and support staff who are based at one of three college centres. There are approximately 100 staff at each centre although about a third at each centre move, on a day-to-day basis, from centre to centre. Each member of staff is associated with one centre and one team for the purposes of line supervision and managerial support. This is provided by a member of the middle management team which comprises 30 teaching and support staff.

**Figure 3: Levels of operations**

The directorate consists of four members — three Assistant Directors and the Director. I have line management responsibility for each of the Assistant Directors. For purposes of day-to-day organisation, whilst maintaining total accountability, I delegate the responsibility and authority for all operational activities of the college to the three Assistant Directors as follows:

- curriculum and learning strategies,
- finances and resources,
- marketing and development.

I moved from the post of Deputy Director to that of Director in the restructured college in January 1989. The need to develop mechanisms for effective strategic planning was imperative and the appropriateness of the organisational structure as a focus seemed logical. However, I determined that the staff would need both a framework and a timetable within which to operate. This had to be both meaningful and flexible and aim to combine what I called 'the requirement of management to manage' with the desire to encourage participation and autonomy from staff. It was also vital to have

a simple, clearly understood, usable college-wide planning document. The framework, timescale and planning document we used are given in Appendix 1.

In February 1989, therefore, bearing in mind the range of external factors which could influence developments in Milton Keynes College (Appendix 2), I outlined 10 broad strategic priorities to the Assistant Directors. These were used as a basis for discussion within the directorate. They were set within the framework of the college mission statement. The directorate had an opportunity to discuss the priorities with a visiting HMI and subsequently with the Senior Education Officer (FE) for Buckinghamshire County Council. The priorities were generally agreed but in no rank order and they are listed in Appendix 3.

In March 1989, I held open meetings at each Centre of the college, to which all teaching and support staff were invited. I explained the 10 priorities and outlined the principles underlying the strategic planning process. I invited staff to become involved in the task and gave a schedule and format for implementation.

Part of this response involved staff, within delivery teams, in setting collective targets through discussion and negotiation with their personal middle manager. Where possible, this was also linked to agreement about an individual staff member's staff development needs, personal action plan, and yearly targets.

The middle managers were asked to produce both a three year development plan and a one year programme for their area of operation. In compiling these plans, it was expected they would take into account the objectives and capabilities of their teams and demonstrate consultation with them. This activity was supported and monitored by one of the three Assistant Directors.

In the same way that each middle manager discussed and negotiated a set of objectives and targets with their staff, so the Assistant Directors determined both a personal action plan and an annual programme in consultation with each individual middle manager. These two documents are used as the basis for regular managerial support and review. The personal action plan is a matter of concern for the Assistant Director and manager only. It is an entirely confidential contract between the two colleagues who agree on its use and purpose. It may be linked to appraisal of individual performance if

both partners agree. The individual section annual programme however, contributes to the directorate three year plan and college annual programme and as such is an open document, available to all staff in the college, the academic board and the governing body. In reality, its detail is unlikely to be of great interest to an individual student, governor or staff member unless they have specific concerns, for example in the art, design and hairdressing curriculum or the examinations and statistics procedures. However, it is the task of the Director and the three Assistant Directors to consider the individual plans of each middle manager in order to synthesise their key points. In this way the directorate devised a yearly annual programme and a rolling three year development plan for the college. The Director and governors gave an indication of the overall pace of change in the light of available resources and whole college organisational capabilities.

Our timescale in the first year of operation was extremely short. It is shown in a schedule given in Appendix 1. It has resulted, however, in the production of three key documents for Milton Keynes College during the first 18 months of its reorganisation — the annual programmes for 1988/89 and 1989/90 and the development plan for 1990–93. I believe that, as a result of our work, we were in a strong position to respond to the demands of the local education authority planning and budget cycles following the implementation of the planning and delegation scheme.

'Strategic planning' for Milton Keynes College has been an opportunity and a challenge. We undertook the process at a demanding time for the college[2] and with little collective experience of such wholesale and detailed college-wide planning[3].

2 In August 1987, the Principal of Milton Keynes College took early retirement. Between September 1987 and December 1988, a second principal, redesignated Director from 1 April 1988 when the reorganisation came into operation, held office. I took up post as Director in January 1989, having worked in the college since September 1986, first as vice-principal and then from 1 April 1988 as Deputy Director. Between September 1987 and December 1988, the four former heads of department took early retirement or obtained employment elsewhere. From 1 September 1990, the directorate has consisted of the Director and the three Assistant Directors referred to in the paper.

3 Despite the requirements to plan related to work-related non-advanced further education, Local Education Authority Training Grants System (LEATGS) and other Training Agency activities connected with youth training, Employment Training (ET) and the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), most of the staff of the college had not really taken part in any detailed cross-college planning, linked to curriculum and staff development, prior to the college reorganisation.

As our individual and collective skills have developed during the last 18 months, we have had an opportunity to repeat the exercise and, during 1990, extend the timescale shown in the schedule in Appendix 1. This has enabled us to set our strategic direction more clearly and suscinctly and to organise our annual programmes for 1990–91 and 1991–92 to emphasise four priorities, namely:

- growth,
- quality,
- improved environment, and
- student-centred learning.

We have continued to follow the framework and processes outlined in this paper and to concentrate more, now we have the experience and time, on the detail and quality of the implementation strategies. We are continuing to evaluate our experience and to make revisions and modifications.

As we manage our colleges into the 21st century, I believe we have an opportunity to abandon the former 'manpower planning' models of development and put into practice a cost effective and efficient approach to strategic planning based on 'investment in human capital'.

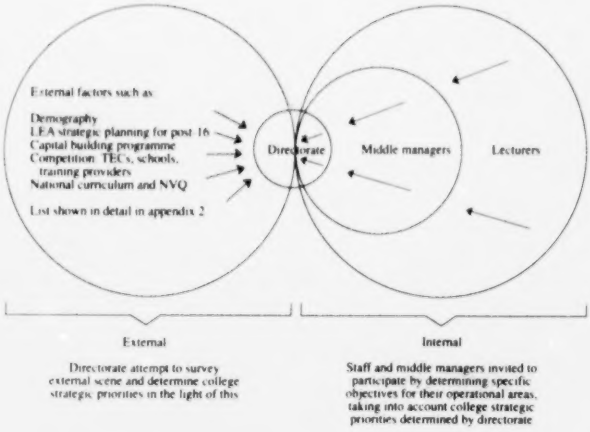
**Appendix 1**

**Strategic planning at Milton Keynes College - Schedule for first year of implementation**

| Timescale | Directorate strategic planning priorities | Middle managers and staff specific objectives |
|---|---|---|
| March 1989 | Directorate held open meetings for all staff at each of the three centres of the college to explain the planning process and invite staff to participate. | |
| 10-25 April 1989 | Directorate to discuss and determine main priorities 1 and 3 year<br><br>Directorate to devise draft planning documents | Middle managers and staff to engage in informal, unstructured discussion; look at mission statement in relation to their own areas of work. |
| 25 April1989 | Strategic priorities agreed. Planning documents produced. Presentation to middle managers. | Middle managers go through 10 strategic priorities with staff and relate to their own areas of work. |
| 27 April-12 May 1989 | | Middle managers to determine specific objectives for each curriculum/development/ resource area, following format suggested by directorate. Discussion and consultation with staff. |
| 12 May-14 June 1989 | Directorate produce plans for academic board and governing body | Individual annual programme produced by each middle manager. |
| 14 June 1989 | Directorate presentation to academic board | |
| 15 November 1989 | Directorate presentation to governing body* | |

* As a new governing body has been formed, we decided to present our 1989/90 annual programme, investing in people, development skills and our 1990-93 development plan to them, even though, in reality, we were already in the process of implementation

## Framework for implementation




**External**

Directorate attempt to survey external scene and determine college strategic priorities in the light of this

**Internal**

Staff and middle managers invited to participate by determining specific objectives for their operational areas, taking into account college strategic priorities determined by directorate

**Draft college-wide planning programme**

**Mission statement: Strategic priorities related to mission statement**

| Specific objectives 89/90, 90/91 | Key indicators including timescale and resource implications | Internal staff responsibility | External consultation & college committee structure | Performance standards |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| List of action to be taken | List of what we will have done, i.e. outcomes and how much it is likely to cost | Who does what? | Who do we tell what we have done? | How will we prove what we have done and how well we have done it |
| Curriculum development including list of all courses/ learning programmes to be run | In the case of learning programmes current, actual and target student numbers should be given | | | |
| Staff development | | | | |
| Institutional development, i.e. marketing | | | | |

**Agreed college-wide planning document**

| Specific objectives | Process | Person responsible | Support required from | Achieved by |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

**Appendix 2**

## EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING STRATEGIC PLANNING AT MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE

National legislation through Department of Education and Science, i.e. Education Reform Act and requirement for Buckinghamshire County Council to produce a strategic plan for post-16 education.

Other national bodies, e.g. Department of Employment, Training Agency, through TVEI, Youth Training, Employment Training and work-related further education development activities.

CBI targets in **Towards a Skills Revolution**.

TUC's **Skills 2000**.

Kenneth Baker's ACFHE speech February 1989 'FE, a New Strategy', and John McGregor's subsequent pronouncements on a 'core curriculum' post-16.

The activities of the Secondary Examinations and Assessment Council and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Training Enterprise Councils (TECs), particularly the Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire TEC.

Strategic planning information from the Economic Development Units of Buckinghamshire County Council, Milton Keynes Borough Council and Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

Chief Education Officer's report to Buckinghamshire County Council's Education Committee on Staffing and Organisation of Education Department in Buckinghamshire.

Milton Keynes College present three-site operation and Buckinghamshire County Council's submission to the Department of Education and Science for a major capital building at the Chaffron Way Centre.

Buckinghamshire County Council's discussions on the age of admission and transfer and the extension of selective education in Milton Keynes.

'The legacy of neglect' in the physical environment, equipment and resources of Milton Keynes College during the seventies and eighties.

The HMI paper **Core skills**.

The effects of the local financial management of colleges as determined by the Buckinghamshire County Council's planning and delegation scheme.

Proposals on vocational education and training from British Petroleum.

The single European market in 1992.

The White Paper **Employment in the 1990s**.

**Appendix 3**

**MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE 10 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 1990-1993**

1 Manage growth and expansion due to demographic trends and increased participation in FE.

2 Expand flexible curriculum delivery and student-centred learning.

3 Provide high quality education and training for all.

4 Earn market value and establish credibility.

5 Investigate new provision in response to local and national demand.

6 Formulate and implement a range of internal policies.

7 Correlate our strategic planning with the strategic planning of relevant external agencies.

8 Monitor and evaluate effects of the Education Reform Act and other government legislation.

9 Monitor and evaluate efficiency of provision related to effectiveness.

10 Promote and nurture human resource development for all.

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# PRINCIPALSHIP IN THE 1990s

Patricia Twyman
Principal
Bournville College of Further Education

## COLLEGE DETAILS — BOURNVILLE COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

Bournville College of Further Education has a long, distinguished and prestigious history. It was founded as the Bournville Day Continuation School in October 1913 to provide day-release courses for the young employees of Cadbury Brothers. The school became Bournville Day Continuation College in 1949 and it was not until 1963 that Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA) assumed full responsibility for it as Bournville College of Further Education.

Unlike many further education or technical colleges, Bournville never had an engineering, building or technical specialism. Therefore, to ensure its survival, past generations of college managers had to seek out new areas of work and develop distinctive specialisms to meet newly identified needs. From 1913 to 1985, a fundamental feature of the college's philosophy was 'further education for all'. During much of that time, both the college principals and their staff had been much influenced by the Quaker philanthropy and humanitarianism that emanated from the Cadbury organisation less than a mile from the college.

Against this historical backdrop it was hardly surprising that Bournville College began to develop specialisms in areas such as special education, social work education and training, health and social care provision, and that particular area, known variously over the years as life and social skills or personal and social development. All were characterised by one common factor — the care, education and well being of people. Similarly the college

gained a reputation as a second-chance institution for a range of people whose social or educational disadvantages had prevented them from succeeding at the first attempt. Frequently Bournville was asked to admit students for whom other institutions could not cater. Of necessity, staff became skilled in many of the areas now identified as training and vocational education (TVE) entitlements: counselling and guidance, personal tutoring, and obtaining and monitoring relevant work experience.

## PRINCIPALSHIP IN THE 1990s

I was asked to contribute to this collection of articles by describing how I can retain and develop the special characteristics of Bournville in relation to special needs and similar areas — and at the same time keep the college well-defined and viable in a competitive world. Indeed, it was precisely this challenge that made the post of principal such an exciting one when I was appointed in January 1986. Being appointed from within the college had some disadvantages but it also had one tremendous advantage in that I was already aware of the problems and difficulties and could therefore begin to institute change immediately.

First of all, however, it is necessary to explode a myth. Bournville College of Further Education is not a college that specialises in special needs and allied provision and nothing else. It is not a college that simply concentrates on what is sometimes described, albeit wrongly, as the 'soft-end' of FE provision. During the 1970s and the early 1980s Bournville had begun to attract an ever-increasing amount of externally funded, income generating work. Indeed, some of this underpinned the growth and development of specialisms such as special needs, and enabled Bournville to acquire a national reputation in this area of work. At the same time, areas such as business studies, computer studies, craft, design and technology, science and maths were developing rapidly.

The greatest drawback facing the college in 1985 was severe under-funding. Lack of engineering and similar provision and a policy of historic resourcing had brought Bournville to a state of poverty which was not helped by the fact that much of the externally funded income which was generated did not return to the college budget. The college had been set an exceptionally high income target, impossible to meet because again it was historically based against income generating courses that had disappeared due to government-led changes.

It is to the lasting credit of Birmingham LEA and in particular to Geoff Hall — then Assistant Chief Education Officer for FE[1] and John Blythe — then Senior Adviser for FE[2] that the first budget I received was turned completely on its head; the income target was dropped to a realistic figure and a generous resourcing allocation was given. Highly supportive senior FE officers and advisers had listened when we argued that if they would invest in Bournville, we would ensure an excellent financial return.

During 1986 a very distinctive philosophy began to emerge. It is now incorporated in the college mission statement and is fully supported by a highly committed college staff, governing body and Birmingham LEA, with whom Bournville works in close accord. It is equally well accepted by the college's NATFHE branch members who are part of the highly committed staff. The philosophy is that of the tri-partite agenda encompassing the academic, economic and social agenda.

## BOURNVILLE COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION: MISSION STATEMENT

In September 1990 the new governing body endorsed the mission statement for the college. The main features of this statement can be summarised as follows.

Bournville College's mission statement is the starting point for the college's strategic plan. The mission statement provides a statement of aims, purposes and values.

The college is committed to a tri-partite agenda: the social agenda, the economic agenda and the academic agenda. The tri-partite agenda enshrines the college's ethos and philosophy. It is well accepted and strongly supported by staff who recognise its comprehensiveness and the balanced provision it ensures in an era when many conflicting demands are being made upon colleges.

The social agenda embraces the college's work for the local community which extends far beyond the immediate locality. It includes provision for people with disabilities and those who have suffered educational or social

1 Geoff Hall is now Director of Education for Bexley, Kent.
2 Dr John Blythe is now Director of Education (Policy and Finance), Birmingham.

disadvantage. It provides for under-represented groups and those who, for a variety of reasons, need a second chance within the education system.

The economic agenda means a very high level of responsiveness to the training and educational needs of local employers in industry and business. It includes a proactive approach to marketing the college successfully, and demonstrating how the college's education and training programmes can assist in the economic regeneration of the City of Birmingham and areas outside city boundaries. It encompasses total financial efficiency.

The academic agenda is interpreted very broadly indeed — the college strives to achieve excellence in all that it undertakes. It recognises that there is equal excellence in many different achievements by students and staff. The academic agenda includes the pursuit of excellence and the refusal to compromise by an acceptance of mediocrity. It implies that to be good is not sufficient; it is essential that the college aims to be the best.

The three agenda do not each stand alone; they are interwoven and courses embrace at least two. A golden thread that runs throughout the college and its provision is that of customer care and customer satisfaction.

Certain fundamental beliefs permeate the mission statement and are essential to its success.

- We value all students and staff equally irrespective of whether they are able-bodied or have a disability, are female or male, black or white, and whether they are young or older.

- We believe in appointing to all posts only staff who are extended professionals and who espouse the values contained within the mission statement.

- We strive to achieve co-operation and mutually advantageous partnerships with business, industry, commerce, local schools, the community and all other organisations who are linked with the college.

- We provide only that which we can do excellently.

- We create opportunities for the fulfilment of the individual in terms of employment, educational, training, personal or leisure goals.

- We believe in the personal growth, enhancement of life chances and the equality of opportunity for all students and in particular for those who have previously experienced disadvantage.

- We regularly enhance the internal and external environment of the college in the firm belief that students and staff will succeed if the immediate vicinity is attractive, light, clean, secure and quiet, and surrounded by landscaped gardens, mature woodlands, and wild life conservation areas.

- We are committed to the concept of total quality in the management of all that we do.

At the same meeting of the governing body in September 1990 college governors also endorsed Bournville College's first strategic plan and its first business plan. The meeting also included three personal presentations from the principal and two vice-principals on college structure, the college budget and personnel management respectively. This endorsement from the governing body was critical in that we, the senior managers, and the staff of the college needed to know whether we were in accord with the governing body in terms of the college's philosophy and its future direction. It was rewarding for all involved to receive total endorsement and full support from industrial, business, LEA and staff governors. As an aside it was particularly interesting to learn that the level of paperwork, documentation and presentations was 'well above that which often occurs in the private sector'. This compliment came from a wide range of business and industrial governors.

## PROTECTING THE COLLEGE'S FUTURE

How, then, will the future of Bournville College be protected, so that all that is contained within the mission statement will be translated into the concept of total quality in the management of all that we do? How, too, will we ensure that the college survives in the face of the cold winds of the market economy? Below are a number of Bournville College priorities.

### Finance

All vocational areas of the college are being encouraged to generate externally funded, income generating and profit making work. No area is

exempt from this obligation and responsibility. The vice-principal (finance) and the assistant principal (curriculum and quality assurance) are involved from the start of any initiatives. All areas are rewarded in terms of successful initiatives by increased allocations. This area of work will be a priority for all staff.

To assist in the generation of finance Bournville will be appointing a marketing specialist in the autumn of 1990, almost certainly from the private sector. The contract will be on APT&C conditions of service, across a 48 week year. The salary will be negotiable within a £4,000 band and will relate to successful outcomes. Appraisal will be built into the post-holder's work. The new post-holder will have two immediate priorities. The first will be the generation of new provision for local businesses and industry. The second will be to ensure that Bournville College markets its provision across all city schools, and in schools in neighbouring local authorities. There will be strong support from the college's director of marketing and a marketing team.

The college has set up a conference centre with two conference rooms which can seat 200 and 65 delegates respectively. There is also available the college's boardroom (45 delegates), Terrace Restaurant (45 covers), second restaurant (24 covers) and the hall (a capacity for a buffet lunch for 200 people). We have obtained details of similar, alternative conference facilities across the City of Birmingham and we guarantee to under-cut all providers of similar facilities. We accommodate external conferences; we also provide local, regional and national conferences based on the expertise of our staff.

The main conference centre is attractive to users. It has excellent car parking facilities, the latest AVA equipment, carpets, blinds, a new decor, and curtains that divide the room into four seminar areas — flowers, plants and wall prints enhance the ambience.

Bournville College is proactive and reactive in terms of consultancy work for other colleges, other LEAs, regional advisory councils and a range of external organisations. Consultancy fees equate with those in the private sector. In the last year staff at a variety of grades have been involved in consultancy with FESC and with local educational authorities in Lancashire, Cheshire, Nottingham, Surrey, Cleveland, North Wales, Mid-Wales, South Wales, and Northern Ireland.

**Customer care**

Customer care and client centred awareness are priorities. An information and advice centre has been established recently. This is regarded by all staff as a major initiative. Marketing begins with the customer. The centre is situated near the main entrance to the college. Much thought has gone into the 'feel' of the centre; it has pink and grey carpets and blinds and many discrete areas with low, comfortable chairs and coffee tables for small group discussions. All college literature is available on display racks and the centre is open to all students and members of the public from 8.30 am to 9.30 pm throughout the week, 50 weeks a year. There are several support staff located there permanently. Academic staff in the centre include people responsible for counselling and guidance, higher education, staff-student liaison, students' union, adult basic education, careers advice, evening adult education provision, and marketing. The centre is opposite the college's 55-strong under fives' group which takes children from the age of 12 months. The customer care aspect of the college's work is essential in terms of persuading people that Bournville is an excellent college to join. In 1990 the college began to make provison for the children (aged five to 14) of students and staff during school half-terms and holidays. Fees are charged for this and the under fives group but they are lower than those charged by nurseries and registered child minders.

**Adult education**

This takes place primarily, but not exclusively, in the evening. It is essentially a self-financing programme and is likely to attract 3000 students in 1990/91. It encompasses the broadest possible range of vocational, non-vocational, academic and leisure pursuits. The self-financing aspect means that annual fees can be as high as £200 per annum. Quality assurance is central to the programme; students continue to enrol. A summer programme in July and August 1991 is being planned.

**Working with the LEA**

It is essential to emphasise Bournville College's very positive relationship with Birmingham LEA. Senior college staff, officers and advisers work together closely at all levels. The city's framework for strategic planning includes the City Colleges' Advisory Board (eight principals and senior officers) and its four vocational planning groups. This framework, contained within Birmingham LEA's 1990-93 development plan and

approved by the DES as part of Birmingham's scheme of delegation for colleges, will set the context for the future of FE in Birmingham.

It is the college's intention to maintain close accord with Birmingham LEA to achieve common goals.

**Other points**

Following initiatives in the UK, Bournville now looks towards the 1992/93 single European market, and beyond, given recent political changes. The college has had links with France (Lyon) and Germany (Frankfurt) for over 20 years. Currently (1989/90) we are linking with: Poitiers (France); Lyon (France); Ferrara (Italy); and Estepona (Spain). A large number of staff and student exchanges in both directions have already taken place and more are planned. An income generating summer school at Bournville is being planned. Work experience abroad and linguistic competency for students are becoming integral features of college courses. In June 1990 99 college staff took part in language training in French, German, Spanish and Italian and the programme is continuing. In November 1990 Bournville will host a European awareness week for business people, industrialists and educationalists in the Midlands.

Quality assurance is essential in terms of ensuring the college's financial future. Customer satisfaction is related very closely to next year's enrolment. Satisfied customers return. At Bournville one vice-principal and one assistant principal hold a major brief for quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation; other staff have reduced class contact for related activities. A course team approach exists across the college. There is a curriculum review and development body which is a major force within Bournville for evaluating what we have done and what we should do.

In addition to all the above items there are further priorities to secure Bournville's financial future in the context of its mission statement. These include:

— excellent relations with the Birmingham training and enterprise council;

— a pilot partnership scheme for training credits;

— further investment in the college environment in the firm belief

that people wish to study or train in a college that is clean, warm, quiet, newly painted, newly refurnished; where college reception officers are welcoming and where the ambience of the college is first class; where toilet and refectories equate with the best possible standards;

- equal opportunities polices and codes of practice continue to be central to all that the college does;

- excellent industrial relations with NATFHE, NALGO and NUPE;

- embedding of TVE;

- implementation of national vocational qualifications;

- a highly attractive college prospectus and student guide;

- a commitment to learner entitlement, learner-centred study, open and distance learning, resource-based learning, IT across the curriculum, an extension of tutorial provision, the concept of a contract between the college and all users, a willingness to investigate quickly and officially any complaints in terms of client satisfaction, and the empowerment of the individual.

## CONCLUSION

Bournville College has a national reputation for its work. There was very clear evidence of this in 1988 when, on two occasions college staff were invited to work with HRH the Prince of Wales, in the area of disability. Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal visited Bournville in 1989 to see the range of college provision.

There remains, however, a very real awareness among all college staff that none of us can afford to be complacent. We are only as good as we were yesterday. There is, therefore, a sentence in the mission statement that refers to Bournville's commitment to the concept of total quality in all that we do. This belief in total quality is shared by all staff. It underlies all aspects of the Bournville agenda — social, economic and academic. It is central to the college's future towards 2000.

# MARKETING OR CUSTOMER CARE?

Gillian Brain
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Acton College

## COLLEGE DETAILS — ACTON COLLEGE

Acton College is one of several colleges in the London Borough of Ealing. Surrounded by many neighbouring further education establishments in the West London area, and with most local schools having sixth forms, it exists in a highly volatile and competitive environment. Originally a strong engineering college, change has already been thrust upon it as a result of the recent industrial climate and the college now has a broad base of fairly typical further education provision in areas such as general education, community care, catering, business studies and computing. The college which used to serve primarily the needs of engineering apprentices now has a high proportion of adults and women students. The ethnic mix of our students is interestingly varied and we have begun to tap a lucrative overseas market. Our links with local industries are excellent and our new enterprise unit continues to add to and strengthen such relationships. At the same time our new crèche, developing access courses and special needs provision reflect our commitment to community education.

## MARKETING OR CUSTOMER CARE?

Since I was asked to write about 'marketing' my title suggests that I am immediately defaulting on my brief. I hope, however, to persuade the reader that 'customer care' is a fundamental perspective underpinning all effective marketing policies. My reasoning is thus: in the old order of FE colleges with relatively stable provision and markets, the definition of marketing which centres on publicity, leaflets, posters and prospectus was

adequate. Interestingly, in those far off times little attention was paid to marketing even at this level. As, however, our markets and environments became less stable, colleges entered a stage of transition. This was the heyday of new marketing managers brought in to improve the college's image and produce in quick succession a new style glossy prospectus, or a multitude of leaflets or both. Long were the arguments on style, colour, print and market segments.

My contention is that we are now in a stage of development characterised by permanent change and instability. 'If you are not confused in management today you are not thinking clearly' (T Furtado 1989). The only way through this complex and unpredictable environment is to adopt a new orientation — that of client-centred awareness and customer care. The one thing we know for certain is that if clients like what they get they will come back for more and tell their friends about it. And because we are all clients and customers we surely have a good idea of what they will like. Few of us have escaped the frustration of entering an unwelcoming shop, finding no-one to help or advise, wasting time looking for what we want, buying an item we're not sure about, receiving crass treatment from the checkout and finally discovering simultaneously that the item has a fault and there is no after sales service. If we were to approach our own colleges as prospective students would we find a different picture?

As the cold winds of market forces blow ever more chill some may be tempted down the old Woolworth's 'pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap' path. To the short-sighted this may seem like the hard-headed, competitive approach suited to a market-driven economy. Customer care may seem to be at the 'soft' end of the continuum, the icing on the cake, 'nice if you can afford it'. My argument is that we cannot afford to ignore it. In a competitive market students will buy elsewhere if they do not feel satisfied. This satisfaction will come from two sources; alternative sides of the same coin — full customer care and total quality management. Our students feel valued and they know they are valued because of the messages we are transmitting through the high quality of the total physical, social and educational provision on offer. Implementation of the recent CBI recommendation that all 16 year olds receive a cash credit giving them buying power in the market, would mean that we could certainly no longer afford to ignore customer care.

To achieve this requires changes and developments on several fronts at the same time for most colleges. Acton College is typical in many of the issues

which it is currently tackling and many colleagues reading what follows will find parallels in their own institutions.

Like many colleges, one of the major issues with which we are concerned at present is that of the college structure. The varied reasons for re-structuring have been much rehearsed and need no repetition here. Suffice to say that these reasons very rarely explicitly emphasise the aim of customer care. In some cases, indeed, re-structuring appears to be much like re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Soon after joining Acton college I attended a meeting at which local careers officers were being introduced to the range of courses offered at the college via a college devised list. When prompted, the careers officers admitted experiencing some difficulties with finding out from the list whether or not a particular programme was run by the college. College staff couldn't see the difficulty — it was simple — first find the relevant department and then locate the course in the departmental list. It took some time for everyone to realise the problem. Some 'insider' knowledge of college structure was necessary for such a list to work. For the 'outsider' the departmental information was obstructive — a simple alphabetical list would have been more helpful. By and large customers don't care about structure and only notice it when it gets in the way. Finding a structure which fulfils basic organisational needs, facilitates change and flexibility and yet is 'user friendly' is not easy. Many re-structured colleges have still not attained this balance and maintain a preoccupation with structure which might be more properly spent on students and provision.

For prospective students, the point of entry to a college is an important transition stage which transmits many messages concerning our attitude to customer care. Traditionally, students encountered a maze of faces, corridors and instructions before finally, if lucky, getting to the information and people they needed. As for the prospectus, again some 'insider' knowledge was required. In itself, this process was a type of selective test. Was the result of this test that the more intelligent found their way through the maze, or did they go home unprepared to put up with the confusion? Our answer to this problem at Acton is the development of a strong student services unit which is, for most new students, their route into the college. Incorporated within this unit is educational guidance, counselling, careers advice and a centralised admissions service. Those entering with clear cut intentions and qualifications may pass swiftly through to enrolment. However, many potential students require advice at both educational levels (what is the right learning programme for me?) and personal levels (money,

housing, visas, child-care). While this service consumes a lot of our scarce resources, we consider it crucial in putting the customer's needs at centre-stage right from the start.

The traditional college enrolment procedure is a nightmare when analysed from a customer's perspective. I am always amazed at the discomfort, delay and confusion which prospective students put up with at this time. Our enrolment working party in analysing alternatives is looking at the location of enrolment, the timing, the further possibilities of postal and early enrolment, the design of the enrolment form, the payment system and a host of other aspects of the process including the immediate post-enrolment period which should merge smoothly into induction. Locked in a system that 'has always been like this' a total re-assessment of enrolment is needed from a base-line of customer convenience and care.

Induction should follow naturally as the next aspect of the entry process. I am not very sympathetic to the view that there is not time in a busy learning schedule to induct students. Students have a right to know about the institution they are joining, all the services it offers, what will be expected of them and what they can expect from the college. A 'learning contract' is being introduced at Acton as part of the induction package which also includes an introduction to key staff, guidance and support services. The greater the reliance on student-centred learning strategies and on flexible learning programmes the more important it becomes that students are clear about their role, have access to help with study skills and know about the full range of learning support facilities. Ideally the induction process should flow smoothly into a tutorial network which continues to support and guide the individual. Through linking personal development and educational progress the individual will feel valued as a whole person.

A member of staff told me recently that he felt no threat from a recently established private college for electronics. Once you had negotiated the deep-pile carpet and the glossy front of house welcome, the quality of teaching and standard of equipment were too low to be really competitive. This illustrates that while the initial customer care is important, it does not end once the student is enrolled in the classroom and on the statistical returns! The quality of the total experience is important as students can leave as easily (perhaps more easily) as they came in. At Acton we are using many strategies simultaneously to achieve this quality assurance. These include the development of course review and evaluation, the creation of flexible learning centres, staff training and development and a review of our

systems and procedure. To motivate us to stay on course we may decide to target the attainment of BS 5750[1] for the college. None of what we want can be achieved without management commitment and involvement. Our re-structuring proposals therefore include three senior managers with a direct brief for improving curriculum quality.

One last aspect of customer care I wish to dwell upon here is that of the physical environment. Like many other further education colleges, our building is run down, our furniture and fittings budget is abysmally low and there has been no re-decoration for decades. There is no point in sitting back and grumbling. If we are committed to customer care, we cannot seriously put up with students having to spend hours in an uncomfortable, dirty, unfriendly environment. It is important to target money every year for improvements which will signal to students that their total welfare is important. Proper signs, pictures on the wall, comfortable chairs, and co-ordinated colour schemes are only trivial concerns if you ignore the fact that a lot of the time the 'medium is the message'.

All this requires major cultural change within the organisation. Much has been written about the difficulties of changing cultures. 'The way things are around here' is known and therefore more comfortable than the unknown 'way things could be'.

A college's history often imprisons the staff within an out of date perspective. I believe that reorientation to a client-centred perspective is possible but it is not easy. Senior management have to be totally committed, probably obsessive, very consistent and extremely patient. Is it worth while? My favourite story from Tom Peters is of the cat food firm which spent much money, time and energy on the design, packaging, advertising and launch of their product before discovering that cats didn't actually like the food. People may be initially more gullible than cats and some colleges may have early short-term success with their glossy image but it will be short lived if not accompanied by deeper, institutional change which permeates through to all staff. I have a number of pens with excellent engraved logos acquired at various courses and conferences attended. My memory of the quality of each course survives long after the ink in the pen has run out.

1 The British Standards of quality control and assurance of the Bristish Standards Institute (BSI). An organisation which meets the required standards is kite marked by the BSI.

Whilst change challenges many aspects of the college's culture, there are strategies we are contemplating which should minimise excess resistance. One is to understand the nature of the resistance rather than condemn it. Another is to develop a flatter, more open and integrated structure which provides for more regular interaction and communication; vertically and horizontally. A common exploration of the college's 'mission' and explanation of what is planned and why should also facilitate the process, as will involving as many people as possible in planning and discussing the proposed changes.

There is a difference of opinion among management theorists as to the extent to which culture can be managed and whether senior managers can really effect change. Deal and Kennedy in **Corporate cultures** (1982) or Peters and Waterman **In search of excellence** (1987) are clear that it is a manager's role to understand, mould and change an organisation's culture where necessary. Thackray's **The corporate culture rage** (1986) challenges the view that managers have much effect. The existence of sub-cultures and contra-cultures, of informal as well as formal meanings have the result that naive attempts to change cultures may have both unexpected and undesirable consequences. A further level of complexity is added to the debate even if the ability to create a homogeneous corporate culture is accepted as possible. This may itself become a permanent, inflexible feature resistant to further change.

In a bad week it may seem easy to take the pessimistic view. However as a practitioner in the current climate it becomes necessary to attempt to effect cultural change and hope to take the majority along with you. At Acton we are pressing on with discussion and debate on what the college stands for and what are its key values. The writing of our mission statement is strategic in this process. Mission statements are often accused of being vague, utopian hype of such generality as to become meaningless. Everyone is in favour of world peace, after all! The fact is that the process of achieving a mission statement may be as important as the end product. I hope the process of discussion and amendment at course and section level, at academic board and governing body will lead to a more coherent idea of what the college stands for, what our core values and key characteristics should be. If there is then dissonance between the final mission statement and organisational practice, this should act as a spur for change.

One of the greatest difficulties is getting all staff involved. Pressures on time prevent many extra meetings; however it is possible to use existing

meetings — whether course team, department, staff development or whatever, by putting key issues on these agendas. In this way the debate is embedded in the system and should filter to most staff. We also have a weekly newsletter which is a forum for information and limited discussion. All staff need to understand their crucial role in marketing the college through the customer care which they provide. The danger, for example, of a post of marketing manager is that marketing becomes something which that post-holder does. Similarly, an enterprise unit may marginalise the spirit of enterprise. We have both a marketing manager and an enterprise unit at Acton but are acutely conscious of the need to integrate their activities throughout the college and to manage both to enable this to happen.

In spite of these difficulties of cultural change, it is necessary to press on — for some colleges it will be a case of survival, for others of maximising effectiveness. Tasks will include a great deal of communication with and motivation of staff, emphasising *ad nauseam* the core values, being consistent, putting resources where your values dictate, identifying and training key people who will help to create change, and always emphasising the central role of the customer.

In the end, of course, what matters is to provide an educational package managed in such a way as to deliver a high quality learning experience to all our students, thereby ensuring customer satisfaction. An organisation which supplies this will survive innumerable external pressures and demands. Whether we call this marketing or customer care is really beside the point.

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# THE WHOLE COLLEGE APPROACH

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## COLLEGE DETAILS — WALSALL COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Walsall College of Technology is located in the centre of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall. The Borough is sandwiched between Wolverhampton to the west, Birmingham to the south and east and Staffordshire to the north. The town of Walsall has close associations with the leather trade and the engineering industry; more recently there has been a rapid growth in the service sector. It is a multicultural borough with a wide range of social class groupings.

The college, formerly called Walsall and Staffordshire Technical College, dates back to a mechanics institute founded in 1839. The present Walsall College of Technology was opened as such following local government re-organisation in 1974.

Before structural re-organisation in 1989 there were nine departments of varying size ranging from grade III to VI, they were: catering, community services, business and management studies, secretarial and commercial, general studies (arts), science and maths (including hairdressing), mechanical and production engineering, electrical and electronic engineering and building and surveying. There was little cross-college activity. There was however a staff development officer, an enterprise unit, a crèche and one lecturer who had six hours remission for counselling.

The college is designated Group VII — there are 250 full-time teaching staff and over 3,000 FTE students.

## COLLEGE STRUCTURE — THE WHOLE COLLEGE RESPONSE

I am not an expert; I make no claims that the approaches I am adopting at Walsall are transferable to other institutions. My starting point is a factual one: many colleges are grubby, unwelcoming and unpleasant places. I have consciously worked my way up the FE system in order to change it. I know we can all make excuses about working in the Cinderella section of education, but I believe we can, in the absence of a fairy godmother, do a lot more with the pumpkins and rats currently at our disposal.

In the survey commissioned by FESC for the publication Managing flexible college structures: part I **Coombe Lodge Report** (1989), the pressure for change in college structure has been expressed generally by principals as resulting from two factors:

- the changing nature of the market and attendant curriculum change; and
- the changing nature of the college — re-organisation, amalgamation, the introduction of a tertiary system, etc.

My personal view is then as follows: external forces and the Education Reform Act present us with a host of challenges; the responses many of us are making are reactive. The pace of change is, if anything, hotting up. This suggests that our organisational structures need to be flexible and organic rather than mechanistic and set in concrete. As an economist I have for years been obsessed by the wastage in the FE system — especially the waste in human resources within colleges. It is true that the departmental system encourages entrepreneurship. Only too often, however, the success of one department is gained at the expense of others. Resources are duplicated, rooms and facilities are used as power tools within the organisation, and a 'battleship' mentality prevails over the purchase of major items of equipment. The energy of senior management can be dissipated into wasteful duplication of effort. There may be divisive game playing, and the principal can become the focus of internal power politics.

I take the standpoint that — at worst — this can divorce senior management from the real business we are about — students, the curriculum and the quality of education and training within the college.

In seeking to alter the structure of the college, I am not doing so simply because student-centred learning is flavour of the month, or to respond to

**Managing colleges efficiently** (JES 1987). I want to get away too from the concept that the administration of the college is to make it coherent only for the people who work there. I wish to eliminate the view that, 'It would be easy to run this place if it weren't for the people'.

## WALSALL'S APPROACH

So what are we doing at Walsall? The whole college approach is based on a flat structure. No hierarchy, everyone has a part to play, including the clients. The most significant performance indicator has to be the client response, whether it is a compliment or a complaint. The objective is quality, breadth and access for all client groups, and the organisational approach is team development at all levels within the structure. The pace of change is necessarily frenetic at Walsall for those reasons, leaving aside the effects of the Education Reform Act. Consequently we are greatly indebted to a large number of colleagues who provide external support to all the changes we are making. Some of this expertise has come from senior managers in other authorities, specialist staff from other colleges, the Training Agency and the Inspectorate at both national and local levels. We would not have come so far so rapidly without this support.

I was appointed principal in October 1988 with a brief to restructure the college by January 1990. The college had had an acting principalship for two years; three out of nine heads of department were 'acting'. The college expected instant change and, although it had maintained student numbers, there had been little curriculum innovation since the late 1970s. The college is located in a highly competitive FE area; there are at least a dozen other colleges within travelling distance of Walsall, as well as an expanding range of competitive private provision.

We are only just starting; the structure is only just in place. Some of it is modelled on tried and tested systems elsewhere; some of it is experimental. We have a management team of eight with functional responsibilities: two deputy principals responsible for development/strategic planning and staffing and personnel; four assistant principals responsible for marketing, curriculum, student services and resources. The curriculum is divided into four divisions managed by 21 senior lecturers. We have, in addition, a number of functional units working across the whole college. Seven of these units (headed by senior lecturers and principal lecturers) are concentrating on the development of the core curriculum. Seven more units

are concentrating on the delivery of on-going support to the whole college in areas such as management information systems, industrial liaison, strategic planning, schools/community liaison, counselling and guidance, assessment and accreditation and staff development. We are using LEATGS monies, development funding, ESG monies and TVE monies creatively to involve as many main grade staff as possible as 'advisers' to the cross-college unit structure.

So far as the timetable of re-organisation is concerned, we are on course. The initial structural plan was approved by governors in April 1989. Detailed consultation took place during April and May. There were several 'whole college' meetings; there were departmental meetings both under the old structure and with the different groupings proposed under the new. Consultations were held with trades unions and support staff. Planning teams developed and completely new groups formed, for example the College Culture Environment Group. A member of staff was seconded for the summer term to audit the college image and report on future developments needed to improve it in the short- and long-terms.

The issue of current and future corporate culture was debated. We invited Colin Turner (FESC staff tutor) to lead that debate. We are making a significant cultural shift — but without rubbishing the good or desirable aspects of what Walsall College of Technology had been about hitherto. There can be problems. Papers by Paul Jeffcutt (1986) and Colin Turner (1987) were circulated and discussed. We hope that awareness will help avoid some pitfalls as change impacts on the college.

The short-term outcomes to some of this were a massive clean-up operation, redesigning car parking space to accommodate more visitor parking, the purchase of pictures, tidying up of noticeboards, re-numbering rooms and altering signs around the building. Curriculum auditing got underway. From that developed the view that we needed to identify a core of curricular activity and open up access to that core to all students. The structural plans were modified accordingly. We are appointing principal lecturers to manage this development work in maths/applied maths, languages and communication studies and science and technology. We obtained some extra capital funding from the LEA to modify the building, take out walls and create student-centred workshop spaces. As a result, a large information technology workshop was created in the summer holiday period from four classroom spaces.

Curriculum development units will work across all areas of the curriculum.

One of the units, equal opportunities, has been so designated to ensure that all development work involves consideration of race, gender and additional learning needs issues as a matter of course.

What do our staff and students think about it? Well we have two newsletters: an 'official' one entitled Network, which is a valuable means of informing staff of the latest developments. It is, however, 'independent' of senior management and can be critical if the editor so chooses. We also have an unofficial underground press called 'Notwork'. If there is dissent, this paper can and does bring it to everyone's attention.

So far the consensus is positive. Senior management is available, we all listen to the comments of staff and student; we are prepared to discuss, to justify and if necessary to bend. We are in the market for good ideas and constructive criticism!

Since these are still very early days, I know there are those who will be dismissive. We have put in place an academic board co-ordinating committee; we are establishing procedures. It is not total anarchy. The advantage of the people-focused structure is that the responsibility for learning rests with the staff and students of the college. The structure is designed so that the people who ask the questions can provide the solutions.

We appointed a college counsellor in the very early stages of change. The primary objective is a central admissions service, initial guidance and counselling on course provision, and an exit programme. We located the unit in the central foyer of the college.

The counsellor is fully remitted but we wanted double staffing and needed a team to support the development. When we audited staff skills we found that a substantial group of staff had counselling experience. Some were already qualified; extra team training was provided but we already had the people to do the job — they identified themselves. The team is now fully operational and fully employed, so in a few months we have moved from six hours remission to 60 with additional support from Walsall Careers Service. I would suggest that many colleges have been selling students short because they have adopted the motto, 'trespassers will be enrolled — onto the first course they say they are interested in', irrespective of client needs.

Our current situation and the welter of change we face in FE makes client-centredness the only sensible approach. I welcome that clarity because it

concentrates our minds on what we are really about. In simple terms, an FE college is part of the service sector. We are selling a service. We need to ensure that the quality of provision matches the expectations of our clients — whether they are 16-19 year olds and their parents, employers and corporate clients looking for the satisfaction of their training needs, or individual adults for whom we should be the major providers of education/ training skills updating.

Nothing new in any of that — but any college structure, in my view, needs to provide scope for continued change and review into the 1990s. At least once a year we should ask the basic questions:

1 For whom are we making this provision?
2 Are we using our resources in the best possible way?

This may seem naive, perhaps it is, but unless everyone in the college has this kind of responsibility and is involved in innovation, real change is impossible.

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# ENSURING ESTEEM FOR ALL IN COLLEGE: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Helen Gilchrist
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## COLLEGE DETAILS — NELSON and COLNE COLLEGE

Nelson and Colne College is a Group V tertiary college serving the needs of the Pendle District — the most easterly part of Lancashire. The district of Pendle comprises the towns of Nelson, Colne and a number of outlying towns. Traditional major employers have been engineering and textiles. Whilst several firms still remain in these areas, local and national firms in a range of other occupations have replaced the decline in engineering and textiles. Within Nelson there is a sizeable minority ethnic community who have originated from North Pakistan.

The college currently has 1,400 full-time students on role, most of whom are between the ages of 16 and 19, and 10,000 part-time students who may be following an evening class, a day release programme or a short course. The present college structure is departmental, with a number of cross-college functions; it is planned that this structure is modified, taking into account the importance of middle management posts and college management functions.

## ENSURING ESTEEM FOR ALL IN COLLEGE: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As one of the first tertiary colleges in the country, Nelson and Colne College developed a portfolio of courses and programmes to meet the needs

of 16-19 year olds in Pendle and a separate programme for adults, including one of the first access courses. It had built up a notable track record of both innovation and examination success, particularly at A level.

As a new principal, I was anxious to recognise the college's past and present success while wishing to initiate a climate of change to meet the demands of the 1990s. After an initial period of getting to know the college I began to pick up a sense of the feelings and concerns of staff, primarily through the senior management team but also in group meetings of staff and in interviews with individual staff. It appeared to me that, although clear views were held about the priorities and purposes of sections or departments, there was no clear recognition of the purpose of the college as a whole. This view was reinforced when I realised that, as a new member of staff as well as a new principal, I was not given any information on the college purpose during my induction. When I looked for the college's original aims and objectives, I found them to be out of date; many of them are now irrelevant.

I hold the basic conviction that a tertiary college must have the philosophy of parity of esteem for all students as a starting point. I also believe that colleges must have clearly defined aims and objectives and, if they are to be achieved, they must be the aims and objectives of all staff.

It also seems logical that for a college to plan its future, use its resources effectively, deliver an appropriate and effective learning programme and create a good learning environment, it must know where it is starting from. For Nelson and Colne College this meant a process of institutional renewal which began by creating from a blank sheet of paper its own aims and objectives with the consequent outcome of a short statement of purpose, or mission. Furthermore, consulting staff widely over the college's purpose would be an implicit statement of the ethos of communication and consultation I wanted to promote in the college.

Given the Education Reform Act, a new governing body (yet to be identified), and an increased role for Lancashire Education Authority for strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation, this process of review became more urgent and more important for Nelson and Colne's future as a post-1990 college. It could also imply a more positive, proactive attitude to its students, to the new East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and to local industry and commerce.

It was therefore fortuitous that while these thoughts were crystallising, I attended a meeting of the Lancashire Education Audit Project (LEAP) which followed on from the Further Education Unit (FEU) project **Towards an educational audit**. The LEAP project is jointly funded by the Work Related Development Fund and Lancashire LEA. Its main purpose is to put into practice within Lancashire the outcomes and guidance contained in **Towards an educational audit** and to develop and review further techniques. Here, then, was an outside consultancy to assist in the process of college renewal.

After initial discussions with the senior management team, a half day seminar was held for the team with Pat Highton, Deputy Director of LEAP and Pam Ackroyd, Head of Planning at Lancashire Polytechnic. After an initial briefing of the current position of the college, the project was outlined. The team were greatly helped by an account, warts and all, from Pam Ackroyd, of a similar process which had taken place at the polytechnic and of both the practicalities and the issues which had to be addressed.

The plan to reassess the college was immediately welcomed by all the senior management team and its importance recognised as something which could potentially have a profound bearing on the college's future, not just through examining the purpose of the college, but also, through discussion of the process to be adopted and the realisation that this exercise should be the first step to a coherent approach to college planning. This would include curriculum planning, institutional and course review and evaluation, as well as more detailed and day-to-day practices, such as accommodation allocation, timetabling, resourcing of courses, staff training and development and negotiating with students.

What became an item of debate in that meeting then, was not the basic issue of whether to embark on the exercise but whether it should be primarily focused inward on college staff — teaching and support — or whether we should lay ourselves open to the wider community — industry, community groups, schools — to ask 'what do you think should be our aims and objectives?' We needed time to think through the respective implications and held a second meeting to resolve the remaining issues. In fact we reached a realistic compromise. We all agreed that spring and early summer 1990 should be devoted to the devising of new aims and objectives and that we should keep to deadlines. We decided, too, that the process of renewal and reassessment belonged in essence to the people who were employed by the college and who indeed represented the college to the

community. Only when we had a draft set of aims and objectives would they be debated with community representatives within the existing structures (governors, advisory committees, TVEI consortium, etc.). Further awareness raising would be the next stage and would involve matching our new aims and objectives with our service to the community.

We then returned to the question of how to open up the process of devising aims and objectives to all the college and came up with a detailed timetable and programme of events.

> General staff meeting for *all* members of staff, teaching and support, early in January 1990. This would set the scene as we began the 1990s, updating staff in some detail on the Education Reform Act, the development of East Lancs TEC, demographic trends, curriculum developments, and would end with a reaffirmation of the philosophy of the tertiary college and an explanation of the need for the college to recreate its aims and objectives.
>
> This would be followed by an item in the staff weekly bulletin repeating the main issues and setting out a programme of meetings to which all staff would be invited.
>
> We agreed that we should urge all staff to attend at least one meeting to debate what our aims and objectives should be. Heads of department were to draw up times (approximately 1.5 hours) which allowed identifiable groups of staff to meet (section, courses, departments, depending on composition of department) and appropriate support staff would be invited to these meetings. In addition, cross-college groups would be named (e.g. student services, staff development) to ensure that all groups were covered. Support staff would also be invited to meetings to suit their working hours (e.g. cleaning staff at 8.00 am) and finally we would call some evening meetings for part-time staff. All part-time staff would be informed and invited although lack of resources meant that we could not pay for cover — a perennial problem and one which causes much concern at the college.

After some debate, it was agreed that myself and/or the vice principal would begin all meetings, explaining again what their purpose was and answering immediate questions. Whether or not we should stay for all the meeting was a keen issue — we wanted free debate; at the same time we did not want a cut and run impression formed. Again a compromise was reached, we would stay for half to three-quarters of an hour and then leave.

We would also go to student groups, if requested, certainly the Students Union, but also to course meetings, if interest was expressed.

Responses from relevant teaching and support staff unions would be welcomed.

A deadline for written responses would be given for all groups. Individuals could also write to the principalship if they wished. As the debate within the senior management team (SMT) progressed, we divided written responses into two categories

a) a record of the key parts of their discussion, critical, historical etc. which the groups could make if they wished,

b) a list of the groups aims and objectives for the college.

Emphasis on the college was paramount. It was vital for us to set great store on the forward looking nature of the proposed aims and objectives and on a college view, rather than a sectional or departmental one.

The group would entrust the writing of its report to a section leader or volunteer. It could meet again as many times as was felt necessary.

After the deadline, all reports in categories a) and b) would be available for all staff to read on each of the college's sites.

A small working group from the SMT would then distil the aims and objectives from the various groups into a first draft for the college. This would be published in the staff weekly news, and departments or other staff groups would be encouraged to comment on this draft.

The first draft, with all comments, would be considered by the academic board, advisory committees, TVEI consortium etc.

A final draft would be written by the working group, to be presented to the SMT, academic board and governing body.

The agreed aims and objectives would be sent to all members of staff, be used in major college documents and be given to all new members of staff.

Once this exercise is complete, the college will draw up a statement of purpose. This may be a college in-house task for, say, the marketing manager and team; we may even use the services of a copy writer. However it is done, it must be lively, powerful and, above all, clear and concise.

We are only just embarking on this programme of institutional renewal; it is to be hoped that staff will wish to be actively involved and, as well as using it as an opportunity to recognise past concerns, will then move forward and contribute to the planning of the next stage of development. As I indicated earlier, this first stage of institutional renewal must affect our college planning, review and evaluation and use of accommodation. It may have other far reaching effects on, for example, the structure of the college, the marketing of the college and the way the college addresses major issues.

The exercise I have described above, incomplete as it is, is not just about the writing of the aims and objectives of the college. It is a powerful statement about an educational and institutional ethos. I believe that consultation with, and involvement of staff is critical to any organisation in these rapidly changing times. It is, in other words, good personnel practice. That does not mean that the principalship or senior management do not make decisions, it means that staff should feel informed, valued and have more understanding of what is happening in their institution. I am also convinced that, if we wish to give students, other clients and the community as a whole

more room for negotiation, consultation and flexibility, then that has to happen first within the college. We have to begin with a position of esteem for all those within the college, staff as well as students.

**Postscript**

Since writing the article, the college-wide exercise for identifying aims has been completed. Staff participation was high (approximately 90 per cent of full-time teaching staff and all full-time support staff) and responses were received from all sections of the college, a number of individuals also wrote expressing their personal priorities.

When the working group from the senior management team was set up to work on all the papers submitted, it was immediately recognised that there was a high degree of consensus on all proposed aims. The way in which the aims were expressed and the priorities given by some sections in ordering aims varied in range and in detail, but clear themes emerged including quality, communication, participation and parity of esteem. It was therefore relatively easy for the group to draw up a first draft. A statement of purpose emerged much more quickly than expected from the process of distilling college-wide aims and was written by the group at a scene setting. Drafts were considered by the academic board and the new governing body and the college aims were agreed. However, several governors were concerned that the aims needed to be related more closely to industry and business. It was therefore agreed that setting of objectives should be much more specific.

In spite of the widespread participation of staff, concern has been expressed over ownership of aims and again objective setting will be crucial in translating aims into tangible, measurable and achievable objectives, allowing departments to rank objectives in priority order.

The second stage is now under way, both in terms of planning the procedure and in ensuring that all sections of the college understand clearly the terminology of objective setting. Senior and middle managers, in the first stage, have recently been establishing criteria for objectives and determining procedures. Each department and college group will be asked, in the first instance, to draw up objectives for a limited number of aims and for those objectives to be measured and carried out within a defined, relatively short-term time span. It is envisaged that this will meet the concerns of the

governors and that it will also move the college on in terms of achieving and measuring quality.

It is worth noting that since the summer term roles and responsibilities of the senior management team and middle managers have been examined and some changes in the college structure proposed. Objective setting is proving most valuable in clarifying immediate goals within the newly defined areas of responsibility.

Finally, the assistance throughout this period of the LEAP Project has been invaluable as indeed has the role of external consultant to move progress, question and when necessary restrain, has been invaluable for the college.

**College aims: statement of purpose**

Nelson and Colne College will meet the educational and training needs of its community by providing a high quality, supportive and flexible learning environment, by both anticipating and responding to change and by seeking to widen access for all.

In seeking to fulfil this purpose, the college aims to:

- develop effective internal and external communications;
- develop wide and effective participation by all sectors of the community;
- develop the participation of the individual in the learning process;
- promote parity of esteem and equality of opportunity for all;
- positively encourage social, cultural and educational diversity;
- pursue values of excellence and enjoyment in teaching and learning;
- take into account individual experience and provide appropriate opportunities for development and progression.

In order to achieve these aims, the college will:

- ensure that all staff have access to appropriate support, training and resources;

- continually monitor and evaluate its performance.

Helen Gilchrist
1 November 1990

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# ARTICLES OF PARTNERSHIP

Ethlyn Prince
Former Principal
Haringey College

## COLLEGE DETAILS — HARINGEY COLLEGE

Haringey College was created in September 1983 to provide for the educational and training needs of Haringey residents.

Haringey College is situated in an Outer London Borough with significant ethnic minorities of Afro-Caribbeans, Asians, Cypriots and Irish. The student cohort is representative of the community and this is also reflected in the staff profile. A majority of managers are female. It is conveniently located near well-know locations such as Muswell Hill, Wood Green and Bounds Green and so can easily be reached by bus, tube or rail.

Haringey College occupies two sites about a mile apart and is organised into four departments and cross-college units offering part-time, full-time day, evening and 21 hour courses throughout the year for students of all ages and at different levels of ability and attainment.

The college is an established centre of excellence for special needs provision and recently participated in an OU/BBC special needs programme. Curriculum initiatives include women in information technology, electronics, art and design, and access courses, all of which recruit significant numbers of female returners to study and clients who would otherwise be excluded from the educational system.

A distinctive feature of the college is its commitment to the promotion of racial and sexual equality and the combating of all forms of disadvantage.

The college is increasingly becoming nationally recognised for its achievements in special needs education and for work with unemployed young people and returning adult learners.

The college is community orientated in its provision and encourages community involvement and participation in its programmes. There are currently 3000 full- and part-time students and 128 academic and support staff. All students are encouraged to become full participating members of the Students' Union which caters for the social and recreational needs of its members.

## ARTICLES OF PARTNERSHIP

A partnership is defined by the Partnership Act 1890, as the relation which subsists between persons carrying on business in common with a view to profit. The carrying on of business does not necessarily imply merely buying and selling goods; the partnership may well consist in the provision of services. The essential feature is that the business, whatever its nature, must be carried on with a view to profit.

In a changing educational climate, with an increasing emphasis on a competitive enterprise approach, product performance, changing labour market needs, quality assurance, and the need for effective and efficient use of resources, education may be regarded as analogous to a business. The Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA) places a duty on the local education authority (LEA) to secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for further education. Further education is defined to include:

a) full-time or part-time education for persons over compulsory school age, and;

b) organised leisure-time occupation provided in connection with such education.

The Act does not specify how each authority should determine what proportion of the total funds available for the education service in its area should be allocated for the purposes of its further and higher education.

This paper is mainly concerned with provisions for the reform of maintained further education for persons over compulsory school age. The

Education Reform Act provides for the reform of the funding and governance of further education colleges which are maintained or substantially assisted by local education authorities. In particular, each local authority has to discharge certain prescribed responsibilities. These include the preparation and submission of a scheme of delegation for the planning of further education, the setting of college budgets, the delegation of college budgets to reformed college governing bodies, and the revision of Instruments of Government.

The Education Reform Act S139 requires that an LEA scheme must provide for the delegation of the management of the budget to the governing body of the college. An examination of the provisions relating to the governance of maintained further education colleges shows that every institution providing full-time education which is maintained by a local education authority is required to have an Instrument providing for the constitution of a governing body of the institution.

## INSTRUMENTS AND ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT

The Instrument of Government of each college is made by order of the local education authority with the approval of the Secretary of State subject to such conditions as she or he thinks fit. The Secretary of State may, by order, after consulting such persons as she or he thinks fit, amend the Instrument or direct the authority to carry out such amendment.

The Instrument provides for the size, composition, selection and appointment of governing body members and the conduct of its business. Local authorities are obliged to take account of any guidance given by the Secretary of State and should ensure that Instruments reflect the particular circumstances of their college.

The Act requires that college governing bodies should consist of no more than 25 members. It does not specify a minimum size although the Secretary of State doubts whether a sufficient range of interests could be accommodated in a governing body of fewer than 10 members. The model instrument which provided for a governing body of 20 was endorsed by the then Secretary of State as the appropriate maximum size for a governing body although local authorities remain free to seek the statutory maximum. In practice, although some LEAs have newly constituted governing bodies of 20, and a few have sought to enforce the statutory limit, many local

authorities have in their Instruments of Government provided for a membership of fewer than 20.

## COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNING BODY

The Education Reform Act S133 requires that not less than 50 per cent of governors should be employment interest governors or co-optees. Employment interest governors must be, or have been, engaged or employed in business, industry or any profession or in any other field of employment relevant to the activities of the college, or must, 'represent persons so engaged or employed'. Employment interest has been so defined as to permit no more than two trade union representatives to be included depending upon the size of the governing body and the particular circumstances of each college.

Further, individual Instruments of Government can determine the balance between employment interest and co-opted governors provided that a substantial majority are employment interest governors. This intention is emphasised even where a college has a significant proportion of non-vocational work by stipulating that there should be no more than three co-opted members in a governing body of maximum size. The Act clearly envisages that co-option would be used primarily to represent interests in non-vocational areas and special needs provision. In addition 20 per cent of governors shall be persons selected and appointed by the LEA with the remaining 30 per cent representing interests which a local authority considers will best meet the needs of the college.

Thus an illustrative governing body of 20 members may comprise:

- nine employer interest governors,
- one trade union representative,
- four LEA representatives,
- two staff representatives (teaching and support),
- two community governors,
- one co-opted member (special needs) and
- the college principal.

Where an authority decides not to allocate places to staff or student representatives there should be provision in the articles of government to enable staff and students to make representations to the governing body on matters which are their proper concern.

## VACATION OF OFFICE BY GOVERNORS

A governor may vacate office for a variety of reasons.

### 1. Expiration of the period of office

The Instruments of Government provide what the period of office shall be. The Chair and the Vice Chair shall hold office for such period as the governing body may determine. A student governor shall serve for a period of one year. All other governors with the exception of the principal shall serve for a period of four years. However, a retiring governor shall be eligible for reappointment.

### 2. Disqualification

A governor may become disqualified, and if so he shall give written notice of that fact to the Clerk of the Governing Body. The following are reasons for disqualification:

a) bankruptcy, composition or arrangements with creditors;

b) where a governor within five years prior to appointment or since date of appointment has been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of not less than three months (whether suspended or not);

c) employer interest, co-opted and LEA governors who are members of the LEA or local authority committee or sub-committee or local authority.

### 3. Determination of governorship

a) A governor may resign his/her office by notice in writing to the Clerk to the Governing Body,

b) unapproved absence from the governing body for more than 12 consecutive months,

c) removal by notice in writing due to physical or mental incapacity or where otherwise unable or unfit to discharge the functions of a nominated or elected employer interest or co-opted governor,

d) any staff governor (including the principal) who ceases to be a member of staff of the college.

## ARTICLES OF GOVERNMENT

The Education Reform Act 1988 S151 requires that '. . . there shall be an Instrument in accordance with which the institution is to be conducted to be known as the Articles of Government'. In determining the provision to be included in college articles, authorities must take account of any guidance given by the Secretary of State.

The articles regulate the rights of the partners (LEA and governors *inter se*) and determine the manner in which the business of the college shall be conducted.

Governors are responsible, in accordance with the scheme for the general direction of the college. The authority, in consultation with the governors are responsible for determining, in accordance with the scheme, the general educational character of the college and its place in the education system.

The articles provide for the conduct of the college excluding financial provisions which are now contained in the scheme of delegation. The articles deal with such matters as academic organisation, grading of posts and conditions of service, conduct, discipline, and grievance of staff, as well as student representation and discipline.

## POWERS OF GOVERNING BODIES

Each LEA's scheme of delegation must contain a statement of the powers, duties and responsibilities accorded to governing bodies with delegated budgets. It is the duty of the authority to place the college's budget at the disposal of the governing body to be spent for the purposes of the institution.

The Education Reform Act 1988 provides that certain matters must be carried out by governors. In particular, the power to incur expenditure without further reference within the delegated budget set by the authority.

The governing body has the power to exercise virement within the

delegated budget across all current expenditure headings, including that of teaching and support staff. Surpluses may also be carried forward from one financial year to the next subject to the conditions laid down in any LEA's scheme of delegation. Governors also have the power to determine the use to which college premises shall be put, and the charges to be made for their use, subject to any agreements which the authority may have with voluntary and community organisations. The LEA's scheme of delegation may, however, provide for governors to delegate any of their powers to the principal.

The Act empowers governing bodies to determine appointments, terms and conditions of service, suspension, discipline and dismissal of staff. The provisions concerning staffing matters give governing bodies with delegated budgets various powers and increased responsibilities which are usually exercised by the employer. It is for the governing body to determine what staff are 'required for the purposes of the college'. However, governors have a duty to take account of competitive tendering requirements when considering the selection and removal of staff in areas prescribed by the Local Government Acts.

The Secretary of State has by Order under S222 ensured that employment law recognises the powers and responsibilities of the governors in institutions with delegated budgets.

The governing body is accountable for the way in which it exercises its employment powers. The LEA remains the legal employer and will continue to pay its employees and provide an itemised pay statement as well as being liable for statutory redundancy compensation. When the college governing body is exercising employment powers it is deemed to be the employer and should observe the following principles:

1 that it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex or race in recruitment procedures, promotion opportunities in terms on which a job is offered, or in cases of dismissal (Sex Discrimination Act 1975), (Race Discrimination Act 1975);

2 that it should acknowledge the existence of a written or unwritten equality clause whereby a woman who is employed on like work with a man, or on work of equal value to that done by a man does not receive less favourable terms (Equal Pay Act 1970);

3 there should be no breach of statutory duties imposed on those who have control of premises (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974). The discharge of these statutory duties will continue to be shared between LEA, governors and the college staff;

4 trade union consultation in respect of redundancies and a furtherance of a trade dispute affecting the college (Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 (TULRA) as amended). A trade union may therefore organise industrial action by the staff against the governing body without fear of being sued in the courts by the governing body, or its customers/suppliers. However a trade union will not enjoy immunity where the industrial action is unlawful or it falls outside S29 of the TULRA;

5 an employer must disclose information such as the financial position of the college which would assist the trade union in carrying on collective bargaining and which is in keeping with good industrial relations practice. A governing body must recognise all unions recognised by the LEA in respect of college staff, but is not precluded from recognising other unions which have college members (Employment Act 1975);

6 maternity rights including the right to return to work within 29 weeks after confinement;

7 the employer must permit officials of an independent trade union recognised by the employer to take time off with pay to carry out duties concerned with industrial relations between the employer and his employees and must permit any employee who is a member of an appropriate trade union to take time off, not necessarily with pay, for trade union activities. Employees may also be granted time off to undertake public duties (Employment Protection (consolidated) Act 1978);

8 an employee of six months or more must be provided with a written statement of reasons for dismissal. The LEA will give notice of dismissal and consequently provide the written statement, but the reasons for dismissal become the reasons for which the governing body required the dismissal. Therefore, in practice, the governing body should prepare the written statement of reasons for the LEA;

9 an employee has the right not to be unfairly dismissed by the governing body and may complain to an industrial tribunal.

The Education (Modification of Enactments Relating to Employment) Order 1988 which became effective on 1st September, 1989, would seem to have the effect of blurring the line of responsibility between the LEA and the governing body. A dismissal may arise for the reason of redundancy if it is wholly or mainly attributable to the cessation or changed location of business, or where the employer needs fewer employees (for instance, by restructuring). Where a dismissal arises by reason of redundancy, the employee's union must consult the governing body from whom they can seek written reasons for any dismissal, but the claim of redundancy payment must be made against the LEA. Although a redundancy situation may be grounds for dismissal, and the employee may obtain redundancy payment, such a dismissal may not automatically be considered as fair, in that the employer has acted reasonably in regarding the reason as a sufficient ground for dismissal. Thus a claim for unfair dismissal may be brought against the governing body while awards of compensation will be enforced against the LEA. Similarly, claims of discrimination may be brought against the governing body but a claim for equal pay must be made against the LEA. The Act makes no provision for industrial tribunal costs in cases which do not involve dismissal, premature retirement or voluntary severance. LEAs should therefore incorporate provisions in their schemes of delegation to show how such costs have been allowed for in the college budget.

Governors may be seen to stand in a fiduciary relationship to the college. They therefore owe a duty to the college to manage it in accordance with the provisions of the scheme of delegation and the Articles and Instrument of Government. They should exercise their powers for the benefit of the college, i.e. to act in what they honestly believe to be in the best interest of the college. In so doing, governors have a duty to avoid a conflict of interest (which may manifest itself in regard to contracts with the college) and the making of any secret profit. Thus, they may be liable for loss caused by illegal or *ultra vires* acts. However, governors will not incur personal liability in respect of anything done in good faith (i.e. honestly and with no ulterior motive) in the exercise or purported exercise of their power. College governing bodies should endeavour to retain freedom of action and avoid such acts as will restrict their right to exercise their duties and powers freely and fully.

The Education Reform Act 1988 and the provision of the several schemes of delegation foster the formation of partnerships between LEA, governing bodies, colleges, schools, learners, employers and other agencies. The growing tendency to use business terms to describe a myriad of educational activities should not be interpreted to mean that business profit must be measured solely in terms of income and expenditure. The profitability of emerging education business partnerships should also be measured by the extent to which the local education authorities and colleges have fulfilled a shared commitment to the delivery of an education service imbued with certain valued features which will facilitate equitable access, effective learning experiences and maximum client satisfaction.

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# COMING THROUGH

Diane Brace
Principal
North London College

## COLLEGE DETAILS — NORTH LONDON COLLEGE

North London College, until recently an ILEA college, was opened in 1921 as Islington Day Continuation School, and has, throughout its history, suffered closures and reincarnations, as this paper descibes.

## COMING THROUGH

Having come lately as a contributor to this collection of further education experiences, I have had the advantage of reading some of the accounts by my fellow contributors before I began thinking about my own. Unfortunately, I cannot match the way in which they organise themselves and others nor their directness of purpose. What I can describe of the last four years at North London College has been an irregular progress, a survival through cuts and uncertainties, external threat and internal dissension. And is the college now pleasanter, more highly regarded and better managed? Yes, I think so — and with greater commitment to student achievement and the realisation of equal opportunities? Yes again, but it hasn't been a smooth road and I have at times been an indifferent leader. And on occasions, I have hated it.

I came to the principalship of North London College following two years as a staff tutor at The Further Education Staff College. It could be thought that I would then have been an expert in management processes — she who had lectured to other principals — equipped to put these confidently into practice. In fact at the Staff College I worked almost exclusively on

curriculum change and brought to the new job only the usual determination to be as different as possible from the principals I had worked for in the past.

North London College is an inner London college, administered until recently by the Inner London Education Authority. Its parentage goes back to the Islington Day Continuation School, opened in 1921 as a result of the 1918 Education Act which raised the school leaving age to 14, and established day continuation schools. Employers were compelled to send their young workers to these schools once a week for a day of continuing education on the Bournville model. During the last sixty years or so it has been closed, re-opened, evacuated, re-sited and several times re-named. A 1947 HMI Report on Day Continuation Schools including Islington, wrote

> The buildings are generally located in the most dismal surroundings and the decorations, furnishings and equipment are dingy and uninspiring.

It would be unjust to suggest that this description exactly fitted the North London College environment in January 1986 — but there were resemblances.

During the first half of the 1980s, the public estimation of North London College had declined. This was not an entirely fair judgement because much excellent and innovative work had been done during that time, particularly for students coming from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. But the college had violence; violence coming in from the streets, violence of student on student, and on at least one traumatic occasion of a student on a staff member. It also lost students; one third of its enrolment by the end of the first term in the academic year 1985/86. It was neglected, denied adequate resourcing during the peak years of ILEA's spending, it was under-capitalised and unmaintained. In 1985 money had been spent on student refectory furniture but styled in a new brutalism, proof against uncaring students, incorporating steel chairs screwed to the floor — somehow compounding the desperation.

Responding to the violence, the staff shut the college for four days in 1985 thus losing pay, in order to pressure ILEA to install a security entrance. Despite this, violence continued only minimally checked; shouting disagreements escalated into physical fighting, hair was torn, people seriously hurt, furniture broken and students robbed at knife point. It took over a year

to change this. Change was brought about by expelling a small number of students, by selective enrolment, by moving from a private security guard firm to our own appointed security staff, by strengthening the effectiveness of personal tutoring, by issuing a college code, translated into the major student languages, and most of all by the emerging, then strengthening vigilance of all staff. A cleaner recently told me how she had been afraid to walk down the corridors alone, contrasting it with 1990s quietness, generally courteous students and even absence of raised voices. The occasional incident is now immediately dealt with by tutors working to the code and to established and publicised procedures.

What else has changed? The interior of the building is generally clean, recently painted and carpeted, and the exterior civilised with shrubs and small trees. It is still not as good as we would like and the weekly Wednesday morning meetings which bring together departmental representatives, the college service unit, the refectory manager and others, in my office, produce lists of fittings requiring attention, and lavatories less than pristine. But the system is becoming more efficient. Perhaps the biggest problem is to encourage staff to be critical again, having become resigned to slipshod cleaning, peeling paint and general tackiness.

One regret, and thus implied advice to all new principals, is that in the first months of the job I did not calculate the cost of renovation and present this total to the education authority. I was then too green to understand the leverage of being new — that this was the only time that I could have made such a demand successfully; greener still not to have understood that the college was expected to fail, and that in the desperation of this scenario, resourcing may have been released.

I have started with security and environmental changes because they were chronologically the first, and remain a personal obsession. When even today I look into arid classrooms with ageing posters and dusty bookcases, I understand that not everyone judges surroundings as being as significant as I do in the learning context. Our most recent environmental improvements are a beautifully designed and equipped work-based nursery for the children of students and staff, a ground floor IT centre for people with mobility difficulties and an electronic chair that climbs stairs very slowly. And one day, maybe the new education authority will buy us a lift. Many colleges are far in advance of us in making provision for students with disabilities; we have advanced as and when we can.

A second change was to 'vocationalise' the curriculum. Many further education colleges offer a mixed curriculum; the reasons why we have diminished general education provision replacing it with vocational programmes are:

— the existence nearby of a sixth form centre offering a wide academic and general curriculum;

— with regard to results — enrolment, retention and achievement — we are more successful with vocational courses.

Happily, this has coincided with a profusion of BTEC courses in a wide range of vocational areas, for many of which we have successfully submitted and now successfully run. Besides these, we continue with City and Guilds and some RSA and CPVE courses plus a large successful and expanding NNEB provision. It is perhaps misleading to characterise this development as 'vocationalising' when an equal and probably larger motivation is for our students to achieve. Coming from a liberal studies background, I understand the arguments about defining 'success' and these days, I do not see 'training' and 'education' as either opposites or alternatives. Additionally, I know that the majority of our students come seeking qualifications as well as stimulating and broadening learning experiences.

In telling a roughly chronological story, it is necessary to pause here and clarify the immediate context of the college's operation. When I came to the college in January 1986, ILEA was half-way through a public consultation exercise before submitting to the Secretary of State proposals to establish several tertiary colleges. One of these was to be in Islington and the formula, publicly favoured and submitted, was for a primarily 16-19 institution created around a sixth form centre, taking some 16-19 students and a smaller number of 19+ students from the college. The remaining 19+ students and sectors of work were to be offered to neighbouring colleges to take over or resettled in an empty, run-down school building — the home of the Day Continuation School in former days. The effect of these proposals was to deliver a harsh blow to the college's low morale, to drive the college union branch into self-defeating militancy, and to divert vast amounts of time and nervous energy into battles that contributed nothing to the immediate teaching of students nor to the enhancement of the curriculum. The college became a besieged single issue organisation while the rest of further education was moving into innovative MSC programmes,

co-ordinated marketing, income-generating courses, extending provision for students with learning difficulties, developing progression routes or promoting access to higher education. North London College fought the tertiary plan and therefore the education authority, and thus reinforced its negative image in the articulate part of the local community. That the plan was absurd, damaging and ignored the interests of large numbers of adult learners was my judgement as well as that of my colleagues. In the end, the Secretary of State rejected the tertiary proposals primarily on the grounds of not achieving resource economies. But by then it was 1988.

In 1988, the ending of ILEA was becoming visible and the first central government move was rate capping. This resulted in 10 per cent cuts across all resourcing of all colleges. Posts were frozen as they became vacant, and these predictably were in growth areas where job opportunities occur more frequently. Areas of work stopped or were considerably contracted, and quality compromised by employing ad hoc substitute teachers. Foolishly, as I now realise, I decided upon open consultation and discussion upon how to respond to the cuts, and was voted by the union branch 'incapable of running the college'. It is perhaps apparent why the job can be dislikeable.

One significant aspect of the college worth mentioning is that a majority of the senior management are women. In 1987/88 all save the senior administrative officer were women and, this being somewhat unusual, we were much written about and analysed. There was an anticipation by those of us who had felt at times underrated by male colleagues, that sisterly feelings would characterise our deliberation — and sensitivity and gentleness inform our relationships and decision making; a 'feminine' as opposed to 'masculine' style of management. It was disappointing that this was rarely the outcome, and most of us have come to see a management group combining the strengths and weaknesses of both women and men as being a stronger and more effective base.

With our emergence from the tertiary battles, even though demoralised by resource cuts, dissension over their management, and a spiralling contraction of the college, improvements continued. Serious weaknesses in the internal financial administration were eventually overcome. A student resources unit was set up, bringing together careers guidance, student counselling, a student liaison tutor, part-time doctor and a youth worker. This provides a direct service to students plus a valuable second line of reference for the personal tutor system, though we still need to work further to bring these closer together. It occupies a pleasant 'village' of rooms

within the main building, in which the students' union has its offices, and arranges exhibitions and information sessions for students and staff on themes from the completion of Polytechnic Central Admissions System (PCAS) forms to AIDS, from black poetry to job vacancies and experience of negative discrimination in work experience placements.

A course information unit has also become established which organises all college publicity, the annual course guide, college-wide 'single door' advertising, press releases and weekly three hour public advice sessions. Work still needs to be done on integrating the unit's marketing functions with those that continue to operate in the departments, and it is planned that this will be addressed in future college restructuring.

North London College has an established reputation for curriculum and staff development. These being my own strengths before coming to the principal's desk, I had hoped to contribute to their further enhancement. Other preoccupations, some already mentioned, elbowed these aside. On reflection, I attempt to work out whether greater resolution would have enabled me to have kept to my original intention, not to have been pushed into the resource authority and personnel roles and preoccupations of senior management. I am sad that I was not able to withstand this and, as perhaps other teachers who have become managers have experienced, I have a sense of personal de-skilling.

None the less, under others' initiative and, I hope my encouragement, the curriculum is in better shape, and cul-de-sac courses have been replaced or linked into systems of internal progression, both within the college and to more advanced study. Engineering, which shortly before my four years had shrunk to a scatter of poorly attended courses and poorly motivated staff, has been reconstructed into strong BTEC First, Certificate and Diploma courses, and the formerly desolate and threatened workshops are busy again. The strength of NNEB and other social care related courses continues under the leadership and creativity of its staff. Business studies is also busy; computers have moved on from the exclusive territory of programmers and word processors to desk top publishing, computer assisted design and imaginative interfacing. And performing arts, save that we still do not have a full-time music tutor, flourish. Media studies, photography and journalism are attempting to meet the labour market demands of the media capital.

Being an inner city college, and one with the committed authority of ILEA behind it, equal opportunities are at the front of our thinking. The effects

of that leadership, albeit often limited to words, need a separate and lengthier examination. ILEA, working on the Judaic assumption that it is easier and quicker to change behaviour than values, placed its strength behind changing the priorities of its colleges. While it is not difficult to see the gaps and inconsistencies, there has been significant progress, the more marked when compared with non-London colleges. A recent element of this has been our mentoring project, using ideas borrowed from the University of Columbia. This was seen during a visit to the States by the college multi-ethnic education co-ordinator, and is resourced this year by the FEU as a project. It involves fifteen students each from the college and neighbouring sixth form centre and volunteer mentors from successful people in the black and Asian communities. The students meet together for additional classes and regularly with their mentors who offer motivation, assistance and encouragement. Provided that our attempts to gain alternative funding next year are successful, we shall use the results of its evaluation to improve and expand.

Women in the college, and not only those in management, are powerful. Sixty per cent of our students are women, and sixty per cent are black. In addition to the three equal opportunities committees there are strong women's and lesbian groups which play an influential role in college life and thinking.

Many students have learning difficulties and there is a wide spectrum of ability and need, frequently within the same learning groups. Resources — but always insufficient — are invested in providing study skills and language support, the latter particularly necessary given the increasing number of young bilingual students, many of whom have just arrived in the UK, or who are refugees; many coming to us because of the inability of school resourcing to provide the necessary teaching.

In 1990 we face transfer and later, delegation. The mourning for ILEA with its proud initiatives and its equalisation of resources between rich and poor areas has been lessened by experience of its dying contractions and resultant inefficiencies. There is also the thought of what it could have achieved with such wealth and so many challenges, given less friction between politicians and officers, and less isolation from initiatives outside the capital. I hope that some sympathetic Gibbon somewhere is chronicling its decline and fall.

Reorganisation is again on the agenda. In three years or so, the college will be merged, reorganised and almost certainly renamed. I think that we are

better equipped to deal with these than last time, if only through immunisation. And I think that we shall have a more effective voice in how it is going to be.

This has been a very parochial account. It misses the heroic sweeps of innovation frequently described in case studies of further education. The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) — lately the Training Agency and now incorporated within the Department of Employment — have intervened only marginally; Training and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), being opposed by ILEA, will not reach us until 1991. And the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), while affecting part of our work, is as yet only a fringe influence. And though we are currently discussing internal restructuring, this was not used as a means to re-package our scenario. This has been an attempt to describe how an inner city college, buffeted by poor opinion and reduced resourcing and with the violence, anxieties and immense obstacles to achievement carried by inner city learners, has come through. And because of the amazing persistence, commitment and idealism of the people who work in it it has emerged stronger and more effective. And, of course, prepared for the next battle.

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Diane Brace**

Diane Brace was born in the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey in 1930; educated at Tiffin's school, Kingston, the London School of Economics and Birkbeck College. She began teaching as an untrained primary school teacher with 42 seven year old boys — since which everything has been easy. She moved to secondary school teaching and then to further education as a liberal studies lecturer, first at Brooklands Technical College then South East Derbyshire College. In 1974 Diane became a head of department at SE Derbyshire, and in 1977-79 National Chair of the Association for Liberal Education.

In 1981 Diane took up an MSC funded post, based upon the WJEC, as curriculum development officer for the 36 Welsh FE colleges for YOP, YTS programmes. In 1983 became the first woman staff tutor at the Further Education Staff College, and in 1986 was appointed principal of North London College.

**Gillian Brain**

Born in Oldham, Lancashire, in 1943, to a West Indian mother and Irish father, Gillian Brain was initiated early in life to equal opportunities issues. She was educated between six and 10 years of age in Jamaica, between 11 and 16 at St Anne's Convent Grammar School, Southampton and 16-18 at Southampton Technical College — a foretaste of life to come! She took an External London Degree in Sociology at what is now Newcastle Polytechnic, and after trying banking (too boring) and social work (too mind-blowing) did what she always said she wouldn't — tried teaching and loved every minute of it. She has been in FE since 1967 at every grade possible sometimes going up, sometimes down, at some colleges in the North and



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others in the South and teaching a range of subjects to every conceivable type of student. She was Professional Tutor at Dewsbury, Head of Department at Brixton College, VP at East Birmingham College and took up appointment as Principal of Acton College in January 1989.

**Helen Gilchrist**

Helen Gilchrist has been principal of Nelson and Colne College since 1st June 1989. She started her teaching career in a secondary school in Lancashire before moving to Skelmersdale College, a sixth form college which then became a tertiary college under FE regulations. At Skelmersdale she was responsible for a variety of duties ranging from head of languages, curriculum development to vice-principal. After that she moved to North Manchester College where she became assistant principal of courses within a matrix structure. Her responsibilities for courses ranged across the whole spectrum from engineering to ESL and special needs, to short industrial courses. She then moved as vice-principal curriculum to Accrington and Rossendale College.

**Rosemary Gray**

Rosemary Gray was born in Buxton, Derbyshire in 1942 and educated at Forest Fields Grammar School, Nottingham, The London School of Economics and London University. She entered FE as a part-time lecturer in 1971 in Birmingham and worked, as many part-timers should do, in several colleges simultaneously. In 1974 she took a full-time appointment with Hall Green College, then in 1983 joined the management team at East Birmingham College (Garretts Green). In 1987 she was appointed vice-principal of Derby College of FE and became acting principal there in April 1988 when the college was undergoing tertiary re-organisation. She took up appointment of principal at Walsall College of Technology in April 1989.

**Ann Limb**

Ann Limb was born in Manchester in 1953 and is a teacher-trained modern linguist who has experience of teaching secondary and further education in the United Kingdom and France. She holds degrees from the Universities of Liverpool and Nancy, France and a Diploma in Management Studies from Sheffield Polytechnic.

She began her career in further education in 1977 as a part-time lecturer at

Wythenshawe (now South Manchester) College. She taught in further education colleges in Manchester and Derbyshire, becoming Head of Department of Management and Business Studies at North East Derbyshire College in 1985.

She has worked in industry as an interpreter/translator for the Merseyside Training Council and for a major construction company. She recently completed an industrial secondment working in the government services division of the management consultants Coopers and Lybrands Deloitte. She has published numerous articles, papers and two books concerned with language learning, and she is a member of the Languages Lead Body and the Electricity Consumer Council.

Formerly Vice Principal at Milton Keynes College she has, since January 1989, been its Director.

**Ethlyn A Prince**

Ethlyn Prince was born in Guyana, South America and received her education in Georgetown Guyana and the Universities of London, Exeter and Sussex.

In 1970, she was called to the Bar of Gray's Inn. She is a trained teacher who has worked in further and higher education in Barnet, West Sussex, South West London, and Guyana. She has also served as State Counsel, deputy HOD Business Management, and Vice-Dean Faculty Social Sciences University of Guyana.

In September 1987 she was appointed Principal of Haringey College which merged in April 1980 with its sister college to form the College of North East London where she is employed as Associate Principal and Director of College Services.

**Patricia Twyman**

Patricia Twyman was born in Cheadle, a Staffordshire mining village, and spent most of her early childhood in Ireland. She was educated at the Orme Girls' School, Newcastle-under-Lyme; Birmingham University; and Manchester Polytechnic. Her teaching subject is Law. After leaving University she entered journalism and worked in Manchester and Fleet Street. To spend more time with her family she began teaching in 1964 in

a secondary modern school on an overspill housing estate in Lancashire. She moved to Bournville College of Further Education in 1970 where she held the following posts: lecturer I in British Constitution; lecturer I in law; lecturer II in humanities and English; senior lecturer, division of social, health and home science; head of department, community studies; assistant principal, personnel and physical resources; vice-principal.

She was appointed principal of Bournville College on 1st January 1986 and was the first woman principal appointed in the Midlands. She works regularly for the Further Education Staff College as a co-tutor and as a guest speaker. She also undertakes consultancy work on behalf of Birmingham Local Education Authority with a range of LEAs, with Birmingham University and with other organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in special needs/learning support; women in management; LEA/college strategic planning; managing the curriculum portfolio; equal opportunities (disablement, gender, race); FE college re-organisation; the implementation of ERA; and other management issues.

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